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Careers in APHIS: An Investment in Your Future

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Careers in APHIS: *An Investment in Your Future*

United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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Invest

in Your Future—With APHIS

Invest in your future with a career in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—a dynamic, innovative agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. You can help prevent or eliminate plant and animal pests and diseases that threaten the production of food and fiber or endanger human health throughout the world. Or you can focus on such crucial concerns as protecting the environment, ensuring humane treatment of animals, or reviewing and assessing the potential impacts of fieldtesting genetically engineered organisms.

APHIS employees work cooperatively with farmers and ranchers, industry representatives, officials from State and local governments, professional organizations and interest groups, and people in foreign countries who are also concerned about protecting agriculture. Our people enjoy the challenge and stimulation of working with a peer group of some 5,000 scientists, laboratory and field technicians, and administrators in the United States and abroad.

This brochure explains how you can devote your talents and interests to an APHIS career—one where your contribution will be vital to achieving APHIS' mission: protecting American agriculture.

Working Across the Con

tinent and Around the World

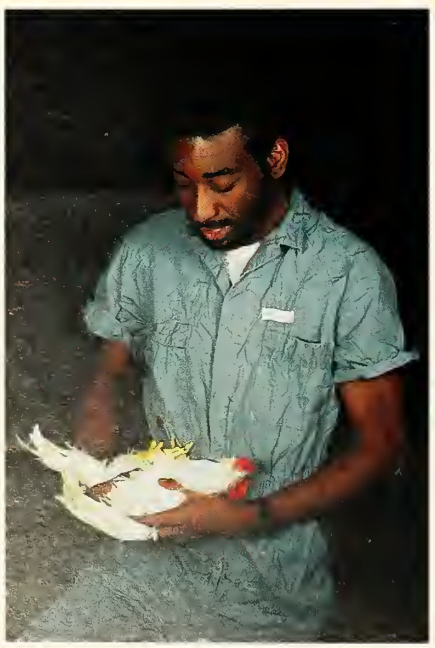
Picture yourself as an APHIS employee working virtually anywhere in the United States or in one of more than 30 foreign countries. You might cross public lands on horseback looking for tick-infested cattle or go to farms and ranches to investigate a disease outbreak. Or you could find yourself visiting the campus of a major university to negotiate a cooperative agreement or analyzing human resources needed for an office in the Nation's Capital. Imagine being the first to apply new biotechnology and biological control techniques to fight plant pests and animal diseases.

Or perhaps the idea of scouting the northern woods to capture and relocate endangered wolves that prey on lambs appeals to you.

Can you see yourself peering at tissue samples through a microscope or teaching Haitians how to control African swine fever? Maybe you would prefer to inspect international cargo at a major airport or seaport and be responsible for determining what fruits and vegetables or animal products may be brought into this country in passenger luggage or containerized cargo. If you are interested in animal welfare, you might choose to be one of our inspectors, checking on animal care conditions at horse shows, pet breeding facilities, or research laboratories.

And these are just some of the jobs available with APHIS!

Animal



Health & Veterinary Medicine

APHIS veterinarians help prevent disease, monitor animal care practices, or conduct studies in epidemiology. They collect and analyze data to support computerized disease surveillance or develop regulations concerning genetically engineered organisms. Our veterinarians work directly with livestock producers to combat diseases such as brucellosis and pseudorabies, or train others in aspects of public veterinary medicine.

They are involved in testing and licensing animal vaccines or doing laboratory studies of animal diseases. They serve at ports to keep foreign animal diseases out of the United States, or inspect the care and treatment of animals at research facilities, breeding stations, zoos, circuses, and horse shows.

Because APHIS programs are carried out both in this country and abroad, some agency employees have opportunities to work in unusual locales. We hire individuals with credentials in:

- Veterinary medicine,
- Animal science,
- Animal welfare, and
- Epidemiology.

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ological & Physical Sciences

Most APHIS employees work in the biological and physical sciences. They can be assigned to a border post to ensure that plant pests and animal diseases do not accidentally enter this country. They may join the "Beagle Brigade" and work with dogs trained to sniff baggage to detect prohibited agricultural products. And they work as biologists, using integrated pest management techniques to fight insects that attack crops and livestock.

APHIS hires wildlife biologists to minimize damage from wildlife, such as coyotes preying on a rancher's livestock or birds colliding with a commercial airplane. Some of our scientists are virologists; they identify pathogenic organisms in serum taken from sick animals. Others are microbiologists; they check the quality of serums and vaccines used to fight animal diseases.

Our people test tissue, soil, and product samples for the presence of toxins, and they establish regulations to minimize damage caused by the introduction and spread of foreign pests and diseases. APHIS entomologists work with the biological control of plant pests, thereby helping to protect the environment through reducing America's dependence on chemical pesticides.

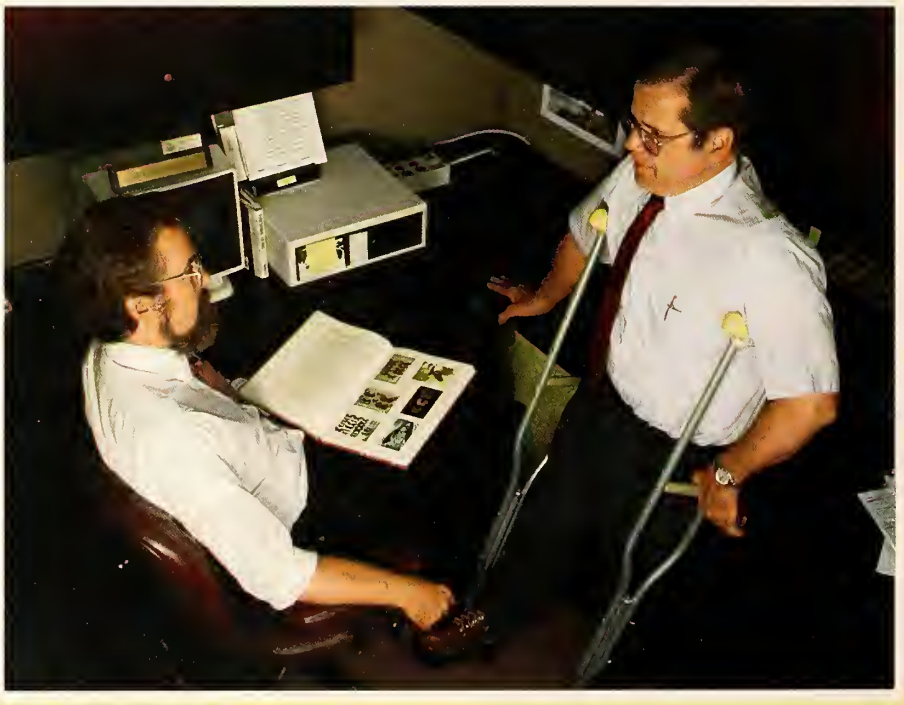
Some of the agency's wildlife biologists study the behavior and population dynamics of endangered species to develop ecologically sound methods of balancing their needs against those of people.

APHIS' weed scientists research ways to control noxious plants. With advanced training in molecular biology, APHIS biotechnologists critically review and assess the environmental impacts of fieldtesting the most current genetically modified organisms.

APHIS' biologists and physical scientists contribute their talents in disciplines such as:

- Analytical and organic chemistry,
- Bacteriology,
- Biology,
- Botany,
- Entomology,
- Environmental sciences,
- Microbiology,
- Molecular genetics,
- Plant pathology,
- Toxicology,
- Virology, and
- Wildlife biology.

Management, Ad



ministration, & Public Affairs

Several hundred nontechnical specialists keep APHIS running smoothly and make practical use of burgeoning technology in data storage and retrieval and electronic communication. They help set or refine policy or supervise field operations. They interpret and enforce regulatory requirements or participate in activities to promote workforce diversity and development. They evaluate spending practices to ensure efficient use of public funds or streamline operations through automation. They communicate to Congress and the public about APHIS' activities.

Most of these professional management opportunities are found at agency headquarters in the Greater Washington, D.C., area. Professional and administrative career fields include:

- Budget and financial management,
- Computer systems analysis and programming,
- Communications and public affairs,
- Information management,
- Human resources management,
- Purchasing and property management,
- Political science and public administration,
- Training and employee development, and
- Policy and economic analysis.

Personal Development and Career Advancement

APHIS' career employees enjoy opportunities for individual development. The agency provides some tuition assistance so employees can pursue advanced education or participate in a variety of programs that promote self-improvement, training, and career advancement. The ever-present need for strong, proficient leaders and managers drives the need to develop and promote APHIS professional and technical employees.

Equal Employment Opportunity

APHIS is determined to recruit and advance qualified employees from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Human relations and sensitivity training helps our people work smoothly with peers from different backgrounds. Employees are considered for appointment, promotion, and other worklife opportunities based on their own merits without regard to race, color, gender, marital status, age, nondisqualifying disability, national origin, or political affiliation.

Paid Vacation and Holidays

New APHIS employees earn over 2 weeks of paid vacation time each year. They can take time off as they earn it or carry it over from one year to another. Vacation leave increases after 3 years of employment and again after 15 years' total employment. In addition, APHIS employees get time off on all 10 Federal holidays. They also accrue sick leave, which can be used for illnesses and for time away from work due to medical examinations or treatment. There is no limit on the amount of unused sick leave employees can carry over from year to year.

ard Your Future With APHIS

Health Care Coverage and Life Insurance

APHIS employees can select from among several health insurance plans. New employees can obtain coverage without a physical examination and cannot be denied coverage because of preexisting conditions. In addition, APHIS employees can obtain group life insurance that offers various levels of coverage at modest cost. A substantial portion of the cost of health insurance and life insurance is paid by the Government.

Retirement Plan

Federal retirement benefits feature a portable, Social Security-based annuity program supported by Government and worker contributions. Employees may supplement their future retirement income by participating in the Thrift Savings Plan, which offers the advantages of an individual retirement account. The Government contributes proportionately to Thrift Savings accounts based on how much money the worker has contributed. Under the Plan's supervision, these accounts can be invested in one of several types of mutual funds.

Flexible Work Schedules

When the work of the agency is conducted outside an office setting, employees' schedules respond to unique job requirements and are designed to meet job demands and their personal needs. Workers stationed in offices or laboratories can usually vary their daily work hours, work four 10-hour days per week, take variable days off, or choose other flexible schedules.

Variable Workplaces

APHIS employees work in many locations—from Government buildings to busy international airports, foreign countries, sophisticated laboratories, or livestock markets. They may even use their homes as their base of operations if they work in a remote field assignment. Some employees whose jobs are portable link up with the agency's computer network via phone lines and work some days of the week from their homes.

Quality of Worklife

The combination of generous benefits and progressive personnel policies gives APHIS employees an unusually high quality of worklife. The agency strives to develop strategies that anticipate employee needs and contribute to their well-being. For example, APHIS provides:

- Free, confidential counseling services to employees with personal, family, or financial problems;
- A leave donation program so employees can help coworkers who are stricken with major illnesses or personal emergencies; and
- Opportunities for employees to participate actively in policymaking through task groups and team-building experiences.

APHIS: *Bank on It*

APHIS pays big dividends on your investment of time and talent. We encourage you to study the leaflets inside the back cover of this brochure for more specific information about applying for positions with APHIS. We look forward to hearing from you!

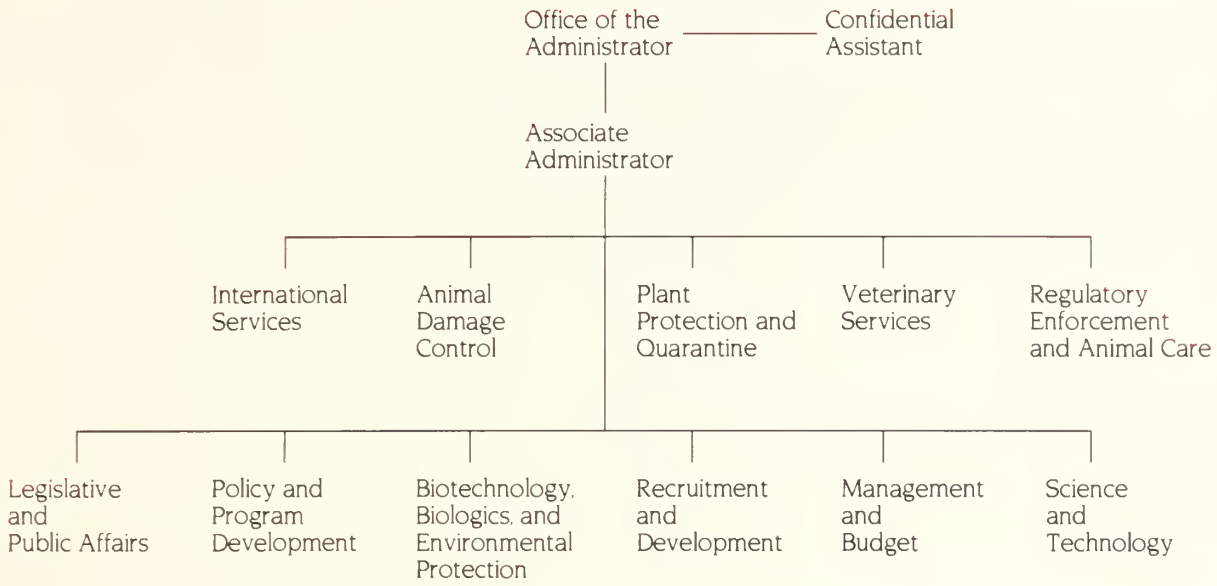
Equal Opportunity

All APHIS employment is based on qualifications without regard to race, color, sex, age, disability, religion, national origin, marital status, or any other nonmerit factor.

APHIS actively supports the Federal Government's goal that the Federal workforce will mirror the gender, ethnicity, and profile of the overall U.S. civilian workforce by the year 2000. Minorities, women, and people with disabilities are strongly encouraged to seek APHIS positions for which they are qualified.

Supersedes "Careers in APHIS," April 1988.

APHIS' Organizational Structure



International Services—Maintains a worldwide information network on animal and plant diseases and pests. Assists foreign governments in combating plant and animal disease infestations.

Animal Damage Control—Controls wildlife damage to crops, livestock, and natural resources. Protects human health and welfare from wildlife hazards.

Plant Protection and Quarantine—Inspects imports and exports to prevent spread of plant pests and diseases. Combats plant pest infestations.

Veterinary Services—Protects health of livestock and poultry. Prevents entry of foreign animal diseases. Combats outbreaks of animal diseases.

Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care—Investigates violations of animal care laws and regulations. Conducts animal care inspection. Ensures the humane treatment and care of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act.

Legislative and Public Affairs—Serves as liaison with Congress and the news media. Develops and disseminates informational materials about APHIS activities.

Policy and Program Development—Manages development of new policies and regulations. Conducts strategic planning and evaluation, designs risk analysis systems, and analyzes pest management programs.

Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection—Develops regulations and issues permits and licenses to control genetically engineered organisms and other animal biological products. Ensures safety and effectiveness of veterinary biologics and protection of the environment.

Recruitment and Development—Develops procedures and systems for agencywide recruitment, training, and educational activities. Prepares and delivers employee development programs.

Management and Budget—Develops policies and systems for the management of human, financial, physical, and information resources. Delivers operational support services in these resource areas.

Science and Technology—Provides diagnoses of animal and plant diseases. Develops new methods to control diseases, pests, and predators.

Animal Health Technician

General Information

Working side-by-side with APHIS veterinarians in almost every aspect of their work are the agency's animal health technicians. They number about 500, and each year APHIS recruits 25 to 50 new technicians. The work may include advising farmers on livestock care, or it may have to do with enforcing regulations requiring humane treatment of animals in dog-breeding establishments, circuses, and horse shows.

Basic Qualifications

Candidates can qualify with a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's degree. The major must be in animal science or one of the biological sciences.

Candidates also can qualify with a combination of experience in livestock management or animal handling. A combination of experience and college course work may be accepted.

Salary

The typical college graduate without any job-related experience starts at the General Schedule (GS) 5 level. With a college degree and 1 year of experience, the candidate starts at the GS-7 level. For salary rates, see the entry level (step 1) of the appropriate grade on the General Schedule of Federal salaries.

Wildlife Biologist

General Information

APHIS employs about 200 wildlife biologists and hires approximately 20 new ones annually. These specialists help reduce or eliminate livestock damage, crop damage, aviation hazards, and public health problems caused by mammals, rodents, and birds. Techniques used in this work include mechanical or chemical controls, scaring devices, and aversive agents.

Wildlife biologists primarily work outdoors and have contact with the general public and private industry. The work ranges from tracking and trapping wild animals to delivering to farmers propane explosives for frightening geese away from crops.

Basic Qualifications

Applicants must have an educational background that includes a total of at least 30 semester hours of college-level study in wildlife and other biological or natural sciences. Of those hours, at least 12 semester hours must be in zoology, comparative anatomy, physiology, genetics, ecology, cellular biology, parasitology, entomology, or related research subjects; 9 semester hours must be in wildlife subjects, such as mammalogy, ornithology, animal ecology, wildlife management, or related research courses; and 9 semester hours must be in botany or related plant sciences. Wildlife courses beyond the 9-hour requirement can be counted toward the zoology requirement. For entry-level positions, applicants must have either a 4-year degree that included the course work above or a combination of substantial experience in wildlife biology or zoology plus the required course work to total 4 years.

For positions above the entry level, applicants must have the required course work plus a year of professional experience comparable in difficulty and responsibility to one level below the grade of the position being filled. Advanced education can also be substituted for experience to qualify for some grades above the entry level.

Salary

An applicant who meets the minimum 4-year requirement above typically enters at the General Schedule (GS) 5 level. The starting level may be higher with additional experience or an advanced degree. For salary rates, see the entry level (step 1) of the appropriate grade on the General Schedule of Federal salaries.

How To Apply

Most wildlife biologists are hired in the State where the position is located by APHIS' State director for Animal Damage Control. To learn about employment prospects, call the appropriate State director. Look in the local phone directory under "U.S. Government."

Veterinary Medical Officer

General Information

APHIS employs over 500 veterinary medical officers and his approximately 35 to 40 new ones each year. These veterinarians provide valuable one-on-one support to livestock producers in preventing and controlling diseases that could devastate the U.S. animal industry.

Normally, new veterinarians are paired for 1 or 2 years with an experienced veterinarian and receive individualized, on-the-job training at locations throughout the United States. They receive training in:

- Preventing the entry of animal diseases;
- Protecting livestock markets;
- Providing laboratory support and testing veterinary biologics;
- Conducting livestock disease surveillance, control, and eradication;
- Enforcing regulations governing the humane treatment of animals; and
- Responding to emergencies caused by the entry of exotic animal diseases.

Basic Qualifications

To be considered, applicants must have successfully completed a full course of study leading to the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Salary

The typical candidate without professional work experience starts at the General Schedule (GS) 9 level. With 1 year of experience or superior academic credentials, the applicant starts at the GS-11 level. For salaries, see the entry level (step 1) of the appropriate grade on the General Schedule of Federal salaries.

Plant Protection & Quarantine Officer

General Information

APHIS employs about 1,300 plant protection and quarantine officers throughout the United States and overseas. Annually, APHIS hires approximately 100 to 150 new officers.

Plant protection and quarantine officers keep destructive plant pests out of the United States by checking for contraband food and plants in ships, planes, vehicles, and passenger baggage at international airports, seaports, and border ports. The officers also track pests through an extensive survey and detection network and conduct integrated pest management programs on designated pests in cooperation with State and other Federal agencies and private farmers and ranchers.

Plant protection and quarantine officers acting as inspectors have to exercise good judgment when they confront people who bring prohibited food or plants into the United States. At some airports, inspectors are supported by detector dogs in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "Beagle Brigade." The beagles have proven to be invaluable in detecting food in bags, purses, and passenger luggage.

Basic Qualifications

Applicants must have an educational background that includes a total of at least 30 semester hours of college-level study in the biological, physical, or natural sciences. Of those hours, at least 20 must be in any combination of the following subjects: entomology, plant pathology, botany, nematology, horticulture, mycology, or invertebrate zoology. The remaining 10 semester hours can be in any biological, natural, or physical science.

For entry-level positions, applicants must have either a 4-year degree including the course work above or a combination of substantial experience in a specialization related to this career field (for example, entomology) plus the required course work to total 4 years.

For positions above the entry level, applicants must have the required course work plus a year of professional experience comparable in difficulty and responsibility to one level below the grade of the position being filled. Advanced education can also be substituted for experience to qualify for some grades above the entry level.

Salary

An applicant who meets the minimum 4-year requirement above typically enters at the General Schedule (GS) 5 level. The starting level may be higher with additional experience or an advanced degree. For salary rates, see the entry level (step 1) of the appropriate grade on the General Schedule of Federal salaries.

Getting a Job With APHIS

APHIS does its own recruiting for some positions, such as veterinary medical officers and plant protection and quarantine officers. For some positions, the process may be handled by another office given authority to examine for particular positions. All opportunities are publicized by a vacancy announcement or recruitment notice, which contains information about the position being advertised and instructions on how to apply.

You can obtain general recruitment information and instructions on how to apply for APHIS positions by contacting:

USDA, APHIS, Recruitment and Development
6505 Belcrest Road, Room 236-FB
Hyattsville, MD 20782

The telephone number from anywhere in the Greater Washington, D.C., area is (301) 436-4949. Our toll-free number is (800) 726-2738.

To learn about specific employment opportunities and get copies of recruitment notices, or to find out where and how to apply for APHIS positions, you can also contact the agency's personnel office:

USDA, APHIS, Field Servicing Office
Employment Section
Butler Square West, 5th Floor
100 North 6th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Their telephone number from the Greater Twin Cities area is (612) 370-2188.

How To Apply for a Federal Job

There are a number of ways to find out about Federal jobs. Because the process can be confusing, here are some tips on the Federal employment process.

Learning About Openings

Federal job applicants are recruited through public announcements called recruitment notices. These describe the vacant position, tell about eligibility requirements, explain how to apply, and give a timeframe—or open period—during which applications are accepted.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) posts these notices and provides general information about Federal employment opportunities. OPM operates Federal Job Information Centers in dozens of major cities around the country. To find out if your city has one, consult the white pages of the telephone book under "U.S. Government." Ask for the "Federal Job Opportunities Listing," which documents both local and nationwide employment prospects.

Making an Application

To secure the best qualified candidate, most Federal hiring actions are competitive. To assist agencies that fill certain kinds of jobs frequently, OPM maintains "registers," or standing rosters, of applicants in some job categories. If there is an OPM register for the kind of job you are interested in, it would be advantageous for you to submit your credentials to the OPM office maintaining that particular register. In this way, you could be considered more than once as vacancies occur over time, without having to fill out additional paperwork.

Once you apply to be put on a register (or, in some cases, take an OPM-administered test), OPM evaluates your credentials or test scores, determines your standing relative to other applicants, and sends you a "Notice of Results." When Federal agencies are ready to fill positions, they look at the top candidates on the applicable register.

Government positions are also filled through a process called case examining. Under this process, job seekers complete an application to be considered for one particular vacancy, rather than being placed on a register. The personnel staff at the hiring agency evaluates applicants' credentials and forwards to the selecting official a prioritized list of candidates, known as a certificate. The "cert" lists the best qualified candidates at the top, and the selecting official may interview all of them before making a decision.

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